

262. The 50-50 Principle and Quitting Porn



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Sara Brewer

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You are listening to the *Overcome Pornography for Good* podcast episode 262.

Welcome to the *Overcome Pornography For Good* podcast where we take a research-based, trauma-informed, and results-focused approach to quitting porn. This approach has been revolutionary and changed thousands and thousands of lives. I'm your host, Sara Brewer.

I'm excited to share this principle with you guys today: 50-50. And I always think it's interesting, whenever I come to read one of these reviews that I've gotten recently, the ones at the top, they always tend to have something to do with the topic I'm going to talk about today. I think that's just a sign that we're on the right track here, but I do want to share with you a review from one of you, my listeners, today that I received this last week.

It says, "Solid principles for everyone. Don't you let the topic of pornography cause you to overlook this podcast because you don't have that habit. The principles Sara covers, her paradigms in dealing with porn, are powerful and true for everyone with whatever you are struggling with. My wife and I are going through the podcast from the beginning, and it's helping both of us in our own areas of weakness. This podcast could be called Overcome the Natural and Carnal Man in all of us for good."

I love that. And that really applies to today because this topic, you guys, I use this topic and this tool, I'm going to teach you all the time. And it's one that resonates the most with people when I talk about it. So anyways, let's get into it. But first, I want to encourage you to, if you haven't left me a rating or a review on Apple Podcasts yet, please take a minute and go and do that. I so, so appreciate it. Thank you so much for all of you who have left ratings and reviews. It really helps me get my message out to the people who need it. So thank you, and it takes just a quick second if you want to go and do that on Apple Podcasts.

So, this concept today, 50-50. If you followed me on Instagram for a long time, you might remember me talking about this. It's one of the first things I posted about when I started my Instagram account, just almost three years

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ago. Anyways, when I first started my Instagram account, it was actually for returned missionaries, specifically returned missionaries in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. That's who I started coaching at the beginning because that transition home is pretty hard.

Anyways, it just kind of developed into how to quit pornography because that's what so many people were coming to me for help with. And the tools, these tools, I mean, you guys know, you're my podcast listeners, they work so well. They work so much better than any of the other stuff out there on quitting porn. And so I just felt like it was really important for me to dial in here and share this in this specific area with pornography.

But 50-50, here's what it is. The 50-50 concept is that life is 50% positive and 50% negative, always. No matter what you're doing in life, no matter what stage of life you're in, life is 50% positive and 50% negative. And it's always going to be that way. It's never going to be any different. Which is good news.

Okay, so whether or not you have a million dollars or one dollar, life is 50-50. You'll have 50% positive things and 50% negative things. Whether you're married or single, life is 50-50, right? And I know, I know some of you who are single, and you're like, "I just wish I could get married." I've just been trying to get married, and I wish I could get married. I promise you, and everyone else who is married will promise you and tell you, listen, it's not all rainbows and butterflies once you're married. It's still 50-50. You have half problems, half negativity in your life when you're single, and half positive when you're single, and when you're married, it's the same thing. You have half negative, half positive.

It's the same whether you have kids or not. It's the same whether or not you're on vacation, right? Think about going on vacation, you guys. We always look so forward to it, and then we get there, and we're like, yeah, this is fun, but I mean, half of it's negative. Whether that be the traveling, or being tired, or maybe you catch a sickness, or maybe you're with kids, there's just something that's always negative. It's always half negative, half positive.

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When I first learned this principle, this tool, I learned it from Brooke Castillo, who is, oh my gosh, she changed my life. She's where I learned a lot of these tools, where I got certified as a coach, heard it from her. It completely changed my life. And how it changed my life is it gave me permission to drop resistance around the thought like I shouldn't struggle.

I remember coming home from an LDS mission and experiencing some really bad depression for the first time in my life. Now, I remember when I was a teenager, my dad took me aside one day and he said, "Hey, just so you know, if you ever feel depressed, you can come and tell me and I'll help you because here's the thing, I struggle with it a little bit and your grandma struggles with it a little bit." And it was kind of a big deal for him to talk about because I don't know, it wasn't really something we talked about a lot as a family. Maybe some of you relate, just, you know, mental health and depression and anxiety.

So I always remembered that conversation. I was like, oh, well, I think I'm okay because I haven't really ever felt depressed. But anyways, I came home from my mission. I got super, super depressed. Like, I remember laying on my couch in this little apartment by BYU and not being able to move and taking this quiz. I like Googled, "am I depressed?" And I somehow found the one from the BYU Caps office, like the BYU counseling office. That's what it was called at that time, was Caps, I think. And it was just this, you know, survey to look at and answer some questions to see how you're doing. And I filled out all the questions, and then the result was something like, you are showing signs of someone who is severely depressed. Please come in and get help as soon as you can.

And I looked at that, and I was like, whatever. And I shut it, and I threw my laptop under the couch, and I didn't get up for another three months. I was obviously very severely depressed, but it's just interesting how in that state, you're really, really resistant to how you're feeling, and you don't really believe yourself when you're feeling that way, and you think that there's something wrong with you for feeling that way.

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And so just a little note on depression, for any of you who might be struggling with depression, if you have the thought, I wonder if I'm depressed, you probably are. And there's nothing wrong with that, and trust yourself and get the help you need. There's nothing wrong with having periods of depression, and there's a lot of help out there.

So, this 50-50 principle, it gave me permission to drop a lot of the resistance that I would have, you know, when I was struggling. So, for example, once I did finally admit to myself that I was depressed, I was feeling all this pain from this depression. And then I was feeling so much suffering on top of that because I was telling myself, you shouldn't be depressed. You shouldn't be depressed. There are so many good things happening in your life. You have no reason to be depressed.

And even, you know, after I kind of, you know, got on medication and got my way out of that situation a little bit, any time I struggled, there was the pain of the struggling, whatever that was that I was going through. And then there was the suffering on top of it that was like, hey, you shouldn't struggle. What's wrong with you for feeling so anxious today? What's wrong with you for feeling so crappy today? It just made it so much worse.

So when we recognize that life is always 50% positive and always 50% negative, and that's just, you know, a fact for everyone. It's just always going to be that way. And there are going to be ebbs and flows in life and periods where you're feeling more positive and periods where you're feeling more negative, but it's always going to kind of even out to 50-50. It allows you to drop that resistance of I shouldn't struggle. So, instead of I'm feeling depressed, and I shouldn't be feeling depressed, just, I'm feeling depressed.

For those of you who are LDS, this is the reason this principle is why I am so in love with Second Nephi 2. The chapter where Lehi goes on to explain opposition and his main message there is there is opposition in all things. He goes on to explain how we cannot know goodness if we don't know sin. How we can't know happiness if we don't know sadness. And I mean, really think about this, right?

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If we never experienced what it felt like to be sad and to be depressed or to feel anxious or to feel grief or just to feel bummed out, if we never experienced those more negative emotions, we would never even know what it was like to feel positive emotions. There wouldn't be that contrast. There wouldn't be that perspective to really appreciate and to feel more positivity.

That's why one of my very, very favorite quotes is "the greater the struggle, the greater the triumph." Like, really think about that. The more that you struggle, the greater triumph comes out of it. Think about all the movies, all the books, the best stories with the biggest triumphs always come because there's a lot of struggle. They don't come without the struggle or in spite of the struggle. The reason there are great triumphs in life is because there is great struggle. This is the 50-50 principle.

And back to this, you know, Second Nephi 2 scripture, opposition in all things. Opposition in all things, that's specifically what he says. I don't remember what verse it is, but opposition in all things includes opposition in ourselves.

So he's not just talking about opposition in the world, like there are good people and bad people, and there's right or wrong in the world, but he's talking about opposition in ourselves. And there will always be opposition in ourselves. We will always feel 50% negative and 50% positive. That's just how life is set up. And it's a beautiful thing when you really stop and ponder and think about that idea, it's a beautiful thing because that's what allows us to be humans.

I used to say, all I want in life is to be happy. I just want to be happy. But I really question that now. I really don't believe that anymore. Because what I really want in life is to have triumphs and to experience everything that it means to be a human. I want to grieve deeply when someone that I love passes away. I want to experience what it feels like to be afraid and then to be brave because I'm being afraid. I want to experience what it feels like to be disciplined and committed, even though those aren't super fun emotions to feel. You see what I'm saying? Like I want to experience life. I don't just

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want to be happy anymore. And that's what this 50-50 principle allowed me to give myself.

And I want you to think about what our world is trying to teach us. Like, think about the messages that we get from advertising and just from people in general in the world, right? They're always trying to tell us that we should be happy and fulfilled most of the time. And that if you're not happy and fulfilled, something's wrong. Something's gone wrong with your life. Right?

Think about movies. If they're unhappy, something's wrong with their life. And then they fix it, and then their life is back to how it should be. Right, and I'm thinking specifically about the movie *Monster-in-Law*. Have any of you seen that one? It's with Jennifer Lopez. We come in, and her life is great. La la la. She meets her boyfriend, la la la. And then, oh no, she has this crazy mother-in-law, and life isn't great. And oh, we better get it back to being how it should be and how it always is, which is great. And then they fix it. And then they have their happily ever after.

Right? In reality, life is not like that. Life is 50-50. If we were to see an accurate representation of that movie, we would see, you know, before she met the boyfriend, all of the 50% negative that was going on too. And then we would also see after they fixed all the issues with the mother-in-law, life would still be 50-50. There would be 50% great and 50% negative.

I want you to think about social media and the messages that we get from social media. I mean, y'all know this. This isn't a surprise, but the message there is, hey, life is great and perfect, and I share the 50% positive. People only share, at least usually, people usually only share their 50% positive on social media. And so when we are experiencing that 50% negative, we think something's wrong with us, when there's not. That's just how everyone experiences life.

Or I want you to think about advertising messages, right? You should be happy. You shouldn't be feeling depressed and down. And if you are, come and get a Kit Kat bar. Or oh no, you got broken up with, and you're feeling lonely, and you're feeling bad about yourself? There's something wrong

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with that. Come and get a tub of ice cream to make it better. Right? You're feeling anxious; you shouldn't feel anxious. You got to come and drink some alcohol to stop feeling anxious, or you shouldn't feel lonely or bad or uncomfortable. Come view porn, right? Those are a lot of the messages that we get from advertising is, hey, if you're experiencing this 50% negative, something's wrong. That's just a lie.

So, the second thing that recognizing this principle does for you is it gives you permission to drop your buffers. When you really understand this, when you really understand that life is 50-50, you don't need something to feel better. Right? We use our buffers to fix that 50% negative. But if we don't need to fix that 50% negative anymore, we can have permission to drop the buffers. And what's really fascinating about this, like remember you guys, the definition of a buffer is that it's net negative. It gives you a net negative outcome. So remember, for buffers, we think it fixes that 50% negative, but it usually creates more negativity.

For example, you use porn to escape feeling lonely. When you're done, you're still lonely, and you have all the negative side effects from the pornography usage. Buffers do not fix the 50% negative. Here's where the problem is, okay? Thinking that the 50% negative is a problem causes us to use buffers.

And lastly, the last thing that this 50-50 principle allows you to do is it allows you to realize that life isn't better there than it is here. So we can stop chasing something else in order to have more positivity in our life because that's just not true. That's not how it works. And take a minute and think about your life, and go back and think about it. Like that's been true for every single area of your life.

You think, okay, once I get into college, I'll finally be happier. I'll have more freedom. And you get into college, and it's just a different 50-50, right? Yeah, you don't have the 50 negative of being at home and having a curfew, but you have other negative 50-50, you know, just the stresses of living alone and learning how to adult a little bit more.

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And then think you're in college and you're like, okay, once I finally graduate, then I will finally be happy. And then you graduate, and it's just a whole different set of 50-50. Now you don't have the 50 negative of the schoolwork and the tests, but now you're trying to find a job, or you have the stresses of working in your job that are just as 50% negative as it was before.

And then you're thinking, oh, I'll finally be happy once I have a partner and a spouse. And then you get a partner and a spouse, and again, it's the same thing over and over and over again. Then I'll finally be happy once I have a house. I'll finally be happy once I have kids. The reason that's not true and it doesn't work is because of the 50-50 principle. Right? Having a little bit of money compared to having a lot of money, it's not happier with a lot of money. You just have a different set of 50-50.

And so that brings up the question, okay, well then, why should I change? Why should I work towards different things in my life if it's not better there? This comes up for my clients in the form of, you know, they have this light bulb moment where they're like, wait, I can feel good about myself right now, even while I'm looking at pornography. Like, why would I quit if I can view porn and not feel bad about myself? Why would I even quit?

And here's what my answer always is. It's because you are not meant to live a life that's running away from your emotions and your relationships with buffers. Because you're a human and because humans want to grow and they want to change and they want to evolve. And because, right, there's this 50 negative that you're experiencing with the porn, how about we try something else for a little while? How about we fix this, we figure this out in our life, and then we can have different problems and different joys. It's not because life's better there, but it's because it's different and because we want to learn and grow as humans instead of staying stationary where we're at.

Some of us think, and this is where those big fear tactics when quitting porn come in. Like we think we have to motivate ourselves to quit porn by saying, I can't feel good about myself until I quit. And we think that's what's

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going to motivate us out of there. But it doesn't work. A much better motivator is because I am an empowered individual that wants to do something hard. And because I'm sick of the 50-50 with porn, I want to try a 50-50 somewhere else.

And if you look around and you look at people that you admire or people that have accomplished a lot of things, these people with the most incredible lives are very, very good at this principle. They're very good at all of the 50% positive, and they're very good at feeling all the 50% negative. And they recognize that the goal of life isn't to make life less negative, but the goal of life is to embrace and feel all of the feelings and all of the emotions that life has to offer you.

So again, when I think about myself and my life and what I want, this 50-50 principle has really changed my perspective. I don't want a life that is happy and positive all the time. When I really think about it, I want a life that is 50% negative. Where I feel sad and nervous and bummed out because that creates this real human experience. And I want a full human experience instead of an experience where I'm always chasing happiness. I want a full human experience.

And we'll get into this in probably another episode, but what I've really learned too, and this is what all of my clients are learning in my program, is how to stop being afraid of those 50% negative emotions. When I think about the worst that can happen and the worst emotions that I could feel, I'm not afraid of that because I know exactly what to do when I experience those emotions. I know exactly how to handle them.

All right, and then one last thing. Next time that you're feeling this 50% negative emotion, instead of thinking, oh no, something's wrong, I want to invite you to think, hey, this is just the 50% negative part, and it sucks. But nothing's wrong. This is just the part where I feel negative emotion. Nothing's gone wrong.

All right, you guys, have a great week. We'll talk to you next week. Bye-bye.

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I want to invite you to come and listen to my free class, How To Overcome Pornography For Good Without Using Willpower. We talk about how to stop giving in to urges without pure willpower or relying on phone filters so that you can actually stop wanting pornography.

We talk about how to stop giving up after a few weeks or months. And spoiler alert, the answer isn't "have more willpower." Lastly, we talk about how to make a life without porn easily sustainable and permanent. If you're trying to quit porn, this class is a game changer.

You can go and sign up at SaraBrewer.com/masterclass, and it is totally free.